

Overseas companies may win contract

# 4-082 Bailiff firms bid for gipsy eviction role

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A TOTAL of eight bailiffs firms are battling it out for the contract to clear Europe's largest illegal traveller site.

The huge level of interest comes as a massive shock to gypsies, who are concerned a company from overseas will win the bid and aggressively bulldoze them off their camp at Dale Farm in Crays Hill.

Companies had until last week to reveal an interest and Leader of Basildon District Council, Tony Ball, said: "What we have received are expressions of interest from eight companies and

that amount of interest has been a surprise.

"Now it is down to whoever makes the best bid."

Hopeful as ever of there being a peaceful conclusion, he added: "Of course we hope it doesn't come to this at all."

Cllr Ball could not rule out a company from overseas winning after the advertisement was published Europe-wide but at this stage he does not even know which firms have applied.

This announcement has caused concern for the 500 gypsies who are illegally settled on the Green Belt site in Billericay.

They are scared they could endure similar experiences to their

European counterparts.

Spokesman for the camp, Grattan Puxon, said: "We would have concerns if a firm from outside the UK was employed to do this.

"The Roma community in Italy and Hungary have had bad experiences of forced evictions as have other communities in Germany.

"If this happens I would still think any eviction will be months away yet as the council still has to deal with homelessness applications."

The firms now have until the middle of September to make an official bid for the contract which is thought to be worth in excess of £1.5million.

## Rubbish pile is set alight

RUNWELL: A huge mound of rubbish was set alight in an outbuilding in Meadow Lane, at 7.36pm on Sunday.

The blaze was extinguished by 9.31pm but crews remained for a further 45 minutes damping down.

## Police hunt homeowner after cannabis is found

THE hunt is on for a holidaying homeowner after police seized cannabis plants from his house.

Acting on tip offs, police raided the property in Stock Road, Stock, and discovered the plants in a shed on August 13.

Unfortunately the owner was

away on holiday.

Police say the resident has now failed to return home.

Anyone with information is asked to contact officers at South Woodham police station on 0300 333 4444 or Essex Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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